THE SECRET OF A SUCCESSFUL FAMILY LIFE

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1

Life Management

In order to lead a successful life, it is important for man to learn the art of Life Management. The art of life management means, on the one hand man understanding himself, (i.e. he should know who he is, what his capabilities are) and, on the other hand, his becoming aware of the world around him. Then he may plan his life in a realistic manner, and make improvements whenever and wherever required.

The only criterion by which to judge whether one had planned one's life well or not is to see the result. A plan which yields a negative result is not right, and a plan which yields a positive result is right. Examining an action by an ideal standard is not a wise thing. Wisdom lies in examining things in the light of the result.

The relationship between a husband and wife is a delicate matter, because they are not related by blood. Therefore, the only way to make this relationship successful is to use reason, rather than

allow emotions to take precedence. In a blood relationship, there is an emotional bonding. But even then, one has to make a conscious effort. The force of nature, existing in blood relationships, does not exist between a husband and wife, which is why it is difficult to manage this relationship successfully without rational management. In short, a blood relationship establishes itself by the force of nature, while a non-blood relationship is established through conscious effort and rational management.

2

The Art of Failure Management

An industrialist once came to me with his daughter. He said that his daughter was getting married soon and asked me to pray for her successful married life. I told him that every marriage is doomed to failure, except for the ones in which the husband and wife learn the Art of Failure Management!

The Art of Failure Management lies in not looking at marriage as something ideal, but as a practical matter and then accepting one's partner the way he or she is. People generally tend to measure their partners by an ideal yardstick, and when they do not measure up to their expectations, they tend to think that they have not found their ideal soul mate. This happens both in the case of a husband and a wife, and so both partners fail to experience the joys of their union.

The truth is that every woman and every man are almost the same. Physical appearances might be different, but inside, there is no great difference. If couples realize this, then they would rejoice in each other, and accept each other as the best life partners.

3

The Policy of Non-Interference

I ONCE ASKED an educated person about his family life. He replied that his family life was good and

healthy. When I asked him what his formula for success was, he replied, "Non-interference". This meant that neither he, nor his wife interfered in each other's affairs.

I agreed that this was the best principle for maintaining harmony in the home. God has endowed man and woman with different temperaments. Every man and woman is different. Therefore, in a marriage, the relationship stems from two different natures. And since God Himself created this difference, we have no power to change it. Instead of making futile attempts to change this difference, we should learn to adjust to it. This principle can be put into these words: *The Art of Difference Management*.

This difference is not an evil. There is great benefit hidden in it. Differences do not mean mere differences: they should be seen as representing two different capabilities. If both men and women had uniform capabilities, they would be able to achieve very little. For, the absence of uniformity is the secret to intellectual development. It has rightly been said, "When everyone thinks alike, no one thinks very much." Therefore, the policy of non-interference is the best policy for a normal and happy life, both at home and in the outside world.

4

The Formula of 30 Seconds

As a man is egoistic by nature, and a woman emotional, they can often be at loggerheads with each other due to their differences. This difference cannot be obliterated. The only solution to this problem is that, when a man's ego flares up, the woman should keep her calm; and when the woman becomes emotional and loses her temper, the man must keep likewise calm. They should not give in to reactions of any kind. This is the only solution to this situation.

A negative feeling such as anger flares up on its own. But, in its initial stage, it remains within a certain limit. And it crosses this limit only when anger is allowed to intensify. The law of nature regarding negative feelings is that it gets activated for only about 30 seconds, and if it is checked, it gets defused like a balloon. Therefore, if a person checks his anger, and does not allow it to flare up, the negative feeling will ebb away naturally, without there being any negative outcome.

It is necessary for both a husband and a wife to understand this Law of Nature, which I call the 'Formula of 30 seconds'. Knowing this is the greatest secret of married life and those who have applied it in their lives will never have a major crisis in their marital relations.

The Creator has placed necessary safeguards within nature itself. The only thing we should do is to learn of these things provided by nature, and apply them in our lives. The way of nature is silent communication. Those who can understand this language of silence will be able to listen to the voice of nature, and benefiting from it, will lead successful lives.

5

Simplicity—A Principle of Life

IN MY EXPERIENCE, most parents do not understand the 'principle of simplicity' in life. They may often adopt simplicity by way of compulsion, but seldom out of choice. Children are very perceptive, and

are influenced by their parents' way of life and thinking. And the children of such parents will fail to discover the value of simplicity in life.

What is simplicity? Simplicity is that state of living in which man has realized the purpose of his life and given it the utmost importance, while regarding everything else as secondary.

It is important for everyone to develop a personality of high moral character. God has created great potential in humans; it is up to them to realize it. It is very important for them to discover their potential and realize their purpose in life. They should develop their minds through study and through their experiences. They should learn to manage their time and utilize all their resources towards the acquisition of their goals.

A purposeful life is an ideal life. Simplicity is a must in order to lead a purposeful life. Simplicity saves man from unnecessary expenditure and distractions—things that hamper him in working towards achieving his goal in life.

6

Exemplary Family

CHAPTER 33 OF the Qur'an refers to the Prophet's family, and says, "God wants to remove all abomination from you, O people of the household, and to make you pure and spotless." (33:33)

This verse was addressed to the Prophet's family, but since the Prophet's family serves as a model to all believers; it is equally applicable to all believers. It addresses every Muslim home. It is necessary for all Muslim households to adopt this reformative course which the Prophet's family was commanded by God to do.

Every house is a unit, and these units form a society. If every unit of a society is reformed, then the whole of society will be reformed. But if the units go awry, the whole of society will also go awry. In this respect, the responsibility of every unit is like that of the Prophet's family, or Ahl-e-bait, as it is expressed in Arabic in the Quran. Every Muslim family has to undergo this process of purification and cleansing, so that evil is removed and goodness is promoted. Every man

and woman in the family is responsible for this, so that a virtuous society may come into existence. And in this respect, both man and woman are equally responsible. But the position of man is like that of an administrator, and a woman as that of a supporter.

It is the duty of both the husband and the wife to understand this responsibility and fulfil their respective roles. This is a duty imposed upon them by God. If they fulfil their role, they will be rewarded by God, but if they fail, they will be taken to task, and God's chastisement will be without doubt the most severe.

7

Qawwamiat or 'Bossism'

IN THE 4TH chapter, the Qur'an states that men are the protectors (Qawwam) of women. (4:34) The word used by the Qur'an is *Qawwam*, and it has the same connotation as the word 'boss' used today.

The word 'boss' seemingly appears to convey the meaning that one is the ruler, and the other, ruled. But Qawwam has a different meaning. Qawwam refers to administration, rather than 'ruling', or being 'superior' to a woman.

Today, the concept of 'boss' or 'bossism' is widely known. We can understand the concept of Qawwamiat with this example. Qawwamiat means that a man is the head of the family, just as there is a head in an institution or a company. This 'head' or 'boss' runs the administration of the company, but this does not mean that he 'rules' it. The common adage goes, "The Boss is always right." This does not mean that the Boss is superior, but that for an organization to function successfully, someone with authority and responsibility is needed at its helm.

Similarly, a home is also an institution. And likewise, a head or a boss is required to run this institution successfully. It is in this regard that the Qur'an has called man a qawwam.

The Qawwam of any home has the position of a manager or an administrator, standing above members of equal position. A home could become a prey to anarchy if this principle were not accepted.

Being a Boss means having responsibility for, not superiority over another. Similarly, Qawwamiat is also a responsibility. It fulfils the administrative need, rather than exercising superiority over one another. If the difference between this practical need and ideological authority is fully understood, then the concept of Qawwamiat will be easy to understand.

8

Woman: A Supporter

THE SECOND CHAPTER of the Qur'an says: "Your wives are a tilth for you. Go then, into your tilth as you will Do good deeds, and fear God and know that you shall meet him. And give good tidings to believers."(2:223)

In this verse, the words 'do good deeds' sum up the basic theme. This central idea explains the full verse, which means that one should be engaged in activities which are beneficial for the future. Man must prepare himself for all the

different tests in life, so that he may gain a place in the world to come. This should be the goal of a person in life. The verse further says that one should try to understand how a woman relates to this goal in life. God has created woman to support man in life, just as the field supports the farmer in the subsistence of life.

This verse of the Qur'an was revealed in Makkah at a time when people were debating about the role of women in life. People those days knew only two things about women: sexual satisfaction and the continuation of the human race.

But the Qur'an says that over and above those two things, a woman extends a supporting hand in building a successful life. Therefore, man should utilize this provision, gifted by nature, and work at building successful lives for themselves. Any other concept of a woman—less dignified than this—belittles a woman's position. A man and a woman come together in marriage so that they may unitedly play their part in building a greater role in human life.

9

A Source of Comfort

THE 30TH CHAPTER of the Qur'an says, "He created for you from among yourselves spouses so that you may find repose in them." (30:21)

'Repose' or 'comfort' here does not only mean comfort in a marriage; it also refers to the contribution a peaceful partner makes towards playing a greater role in life.

A unified effort alone enables great tasks to be accomplished in this world. A solitary person cannot perform any great feat. The first and most natural form of this united feat is for a man and a woman to come together in marriage. This brings two souls together, and this unity of the two souls is the only unity that produces mutual trust and love.

The coming together of a man and a woman in marriage creates the greatest companionship in this world. If both the husband and wife realize this and take it as a blessing from God, they can

unitedly perform such great feats that no other human companionship can ever accomplish.

Take the example of the famous French couple Pierre Curie (d 1906) and Mary Curie (d 1934), who unitedly performed great feats in the field of modern science. Their work was acknowledged, and they were duly awarded the Nobel Prize in 1903 and 1911. This same potential is waiting to be discovered in other men and women too. Any couple can achieve success in their special fields and help in the shaping of history.

Nature has endowed men and women with great capabilities. Anyone who recognises his role and works hard can achieve success in his own particular field. Unfortunately, the superior role of women has not been fully recognized either by the western or eastern world.

10

Emotionalism Vs Egoism

When a man and a woman tie the knot in marriage, it is a coming together of two opposite personalities. A woman tends to be emotional, while a man tends to be egoistic. These traits are a part of their nature.

There is a positive as well as a negative aspect to both these traits. If they are put to positive use, it will prove to be a boon to humanity. But if they are put to negative use, it will prove to be a bane for humanity.

The positive aspect of egoism in man is that, it is one of the driving forces in working steadfastly for a cause. A man bereft of this quality will be weak, lacking in will-power, and will fail to accomplish any task which requires determination and perseverance. But the negative aspect is that it will make him arrogant. Therefore, one must be very careful, and not allow one's ego to sway one towards the negative side, as this would be counterproductive and bring one rite disrepute.

Similarly, a woman tends to be on the emotional side. This trait too has its positive as well as its negative aspects. The positive aspect is that she tends to be more sensitive, and therefore more gentle and compassionate, which is, without doubt, a positive quality. But the negative aspect is that it can give her an obstinate personality, thus making her stubborn even when a flexible approach is necessary. If a woman allows this aspect of her nature to go unchecked, it will be detrimental to the wholesome development of her personality.

A man and a woman, both, ought to understand the natural traits they are born with. They must consciously strive to make use of their positive aspects, and sedulously refrain from taking any negative course. The secret of success in both men and women lies in this self-control.

11

The Home: A Factory for Producing Good Individuals

PREPARING THE NEXT generation is a mother's responsibility. The human generation is like a flowing river, where the water is continually replaced. In human beings too, the new replaces the old. And a mother plays the crucial role of preparing this new generation. The responsibility of supplying good human beings to every generation devolves upon her.

How do you define a good person? A good person is one who has the courage to face life; one who is endowed with a positive attitude, who is constructive and makes a positive congenial contribution to society.

What is a mother's role in this regard? Let us illustrate this with the example of Nancy Alwa Edison, Thomas Elwa Edison's (d 1931) mother. Edison was hard of hearing from birth, and in consequence performed badly in school. He was eventually expelled as a retarded child.

But Edison's mother played a constructive role in shaping her son's future. She implanted the idea in her son's mind that he was not retarded, and that this impediment was a challenge. She made Edison's education her mission, and encouraged her son to use his natural abilities to overcome his obstacles. The result is that Edison's name is now recorded in history as that of a great scientist!

It is commonly believed that one born into a wealthy family is fortunate, while one born into a poor family is unfortunate. Here too, a mother's role is to make her child feel privileged no matter what the circumstances, and that even if one was not born with the proverbial silver spoon in one's mouth, one still had the 'incentive spoon'! She should also show her children how most of the successful people are where they are today because they struggled and worked hard to achieve what they have achieved today.

Likewise, a mother should teach her children not to divide people on the basis of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. It is often seen that although certain individuals have been born into deprived families, they have risen to become members of the privileged classes! Therefore, the dichotomy is not between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', but

between 'potential haves' and 'actual-haves'. Therefore, it is important to have courage in life, coupled with a positive attitude. It is the duty of every generation to imbue the next generation with the courage and maturity to face the realities of life.

12

The Harm of Pampering

SOME PARENTS FEEL, out of love, that since their daughter shall have to do household chores after marriage in her new home, they exempt her from doing any work at home. And so when the daughter eventually does marry, she is not accustomed to taking care of her new house or taking up new responsibilities. This kind of love is not true love.

Such parents usually start preparing for their daughter's dowry right after she is born. In most cases this dowry is not put to any good use, and just becomes a means of temporary display. The

dowry does not, in any way help the daughter to establish her life in her new home. Dowry has nothing to do with the role the daughter has to play in her in-law's house.

The real task of the parents should be to prepare their daughter for the future, not just prepare her dowry. She should be given an education, and proper training in social etiquette, so that she has the wisdom and fortitude to make her life a success.

Pampering, a part of the culture in many homes, is expressed in many ways. Parents tend to pamper their children by trying to fulfil all their desires. They often ignore the faults of their children, hoping that they will outgrow them. Where things go wrong they mostly hold their children innocent and lay the blame on others. Some pamper their children at the cost of their health, in giving in to all their fancies about food and drinks, and in how they dress too. Demonstrating one's love in these ways is not commendable, for, as a result of this, children are not aware of the realities of life, and grow up spoilt.

13

The Faulty Role of Parents

A MOTHER'S GREATEST concern should be to make her children succeed in life. But mothers are naturally attached to their children, and therefore their hearts rule their heads. In matters regarding their children, they do not follow reason, and try to fulfil all the demands of their children. By nature, every child is born pure. But as he grows up, he deviates from his true nature. It is a mother's duty to play a constructive role in bringing up her children, so that they do not deviate from the true nature they were born with.

Mothers, in their love for their children, try to fulfil all their demands, and this makes them think that all of their wishes should be fulfilled. But when the child grows up and comes into contact with the outside world, he learns the opposite. This contradiction can yield negative results in young minds. He learns that while he is loved and protected within the confines of his home, the outside world is bad and full of hostility. This can make him confused, and unable to comprehend

reality. God has imbued the mother with immense love for her child, and the purpose of this love is to enable them to train their children with love and patience, show them the right path and give them the strength to face all odds. But most mothers have turned their love to pampering their children, and so have led them astray from the nature God had intended for them.

14

Man's Real Purpose in Life

WHILE ON A JOURNEY, I met an educated Muslim. He had a big well-furnished house, but there was no one to live there, except for himself and his wife. In the course of conversation, I learnt that he had a son and a daughter, and he had given them the best education that he could afford after which they had gone abroad and become citizens there. When I asked his wife whether she felt their absence, she replied, "I am happy that they are happy wherever they are!"

There are many such parents who have given their children the best education, but afterwards are left alone. The parents live in their grand houses, but their lives are far from grand. They have nothing to sustain them, except for memories. This is the story of most affluent parents. They earn money and build successful worlds for themselves; but later on, their hope-filled lives turn into lonely lives.

The principal reason for this is that they lead purposeless lives. Their only purpose in life was to keep their children happy, and when the children left them, they had no other purpose.

Having a purpose in life depends upon one's inner conviction. It does not rely on the presence or the absence of people. A man and a woman bind themselves in marriage in order to build a world of their own, but due to a lack of full commitment, they make their children the centre of their lives. Educating children is a responsibility, but not the sole purpose of life. If parents understand this aspect of marriage, they will plan their lives accordingly, and will save themselves from disappointments later on.

15

The Important Role of a Woman

There is a maxim which says: There is a woman at the beginning of all great things.

One example in this case is that of Nancy Alwa Edison, the mother of Thomas Alwa Edison, (d. 1931) the famous scientist whose discoveries in science number more than a 1000. It was Nancy Edison, a school teacher, who worked hard to add the name of Thomas Edison to the list of the world's greatest scientists.

Edison's hearing was impaired from birth. He could not hear properly, and was thus expelled from school. But his mother was not one to give up easily. She took the responsibility of educating her son and home-schooled him, arranging for all his educational requirements. Edison acknowledged the role of his mother in his life: "She instilled in me the love and the purpose of learning."

Everyone can be like Edison's mother. Every woman is endowed with the capacity to play this

role, provided she understands the abilities God has given her, and utilizes them determinedly. However, the greatest quality required for this job is patience. The capability is created by the Creator, but the price of patience has to be paid by the person concerned. A woman who can pay this price can play a great role, just like Edison's mother.

16

Gender Equality

In a seminar in Delhi, I met a retired Judge who asked, "Maulana Sahab, do you know what the weakest point in Islam is? Islam does not admit gender equality!"

Modern man finds such concepts unacceptable. The modern age is one of gender equality, while Islam talks of gender inequality. This concept is shared by most people of the world today. But this concept is not based on a deeper reflection of the term. Gender inequality is a matter

concerning gender difference, and does not concern itself with gender inequality. The whole world is based on this difference, and the matter concerning men and women is not an exception to this rule.

There is nothing negative about this difference. Difference is a positive term. The difference between men and women can be compared to the two wheels of a cart. One wheel is not equal to the other. They are complimentary to one another. God had made biological and psychological differences between a man and a woman. This difference is made so that they become good life partners of one another. Both are complimentary to one another.

The concept of gender equality is an unnatural concept. It creates unnecessary conflict between the two. But the concept of gender differences produces the concept of being complimentary to each other, of supporting each other. It enables the partners to run the cart of life like two wheels joined together.

17

Equality in Marriage

It is generally understood that, marriages are solemnized between families of equal status for practical reasons. In such situations, it is believed that adjustments would be easier and would, thus, ensure a happy family life. However, in reality, this is just a supposition. If we look closely, we can find that marriages among equals suffer as much. Equality, therefore, does not assure success in nuptial relations. A successful marriage depends more on learning the art of management.

It is also commonly held that marriages do not work for couples who come from different educational backgrounds, and where there are regional differences, and disparity in economic status, etc. This is also a wrong assumption. A home is similar to a full-fledged institution. Like other institutions, a home also has many departments. The easiest way to run this institution is to have a division of labour between men and women. Men and women should take up different departments, in accordance with

their different capabilities, and run the department independently, without interfering with one other. Thus, in this division of labour, the problem of inequality will be solved.

18

Monogamy or Polygamy

CHAPTER 4 OF the Qur'an allows a man to have four wives (4:3). This does not mean that every man should have four wives. This rule is an exception, and not to be taken in a general sense. The general rule is to have only one wife; but in a case of real necessity, a man can have more than one wife.

This need refers to a situation where, by some unfortunate incident, there is disparity between the number of men and women in society. When there are more women than men, there is sexual anarchy. To overcome this inequality, in dire cases, men are allowed to have more than one wife.

The truth is that a natural way of marriage is between one man and one woman. For a man is naturally biased against the second wife in most cases. This suffices to prove that monogamy is the natural way, while polygamy is permitted in exceptional circumstances by the law of necessity. There are exceptional laws of this kind which cover other cases as well. But exceptional laws are exceptional laws, and they cannot be applied in general.

19

The Failure of a Love Marriage

WITH LOVE MARRIAGES becoming more common, people now believe that they have discovered the final formula for a successful marriage. They feel that they can now marry according to their own choices and build homes according to their own desires. But experience has shown otherwise. Today people all over the world marry the partners of their choice; but surveys reveal that more than 50% of such marriages fail, with most

of them ending in divorces. A love marriage failed to ensure them a happily married life.

What causes these love marriages to fail? The term 'love marriage' is a beautiful name for a union which is not natural: a union that arises out of initial physical attraction. But all that glitters is not gold, as is revealed to such people after marriage, where one has to face reality.

An affair before marriage is in many ways deceptive, but after the marriage this initial deceptiveness disappears and gives way to reality. What appeared extraordinary before marriage appears ordinary afterwards. Frustration thus sets in, which results in either separation or bitterness. It is better to leave the matter regarding marriage to one's parents. But parents should take a decision only after taking the consent of their children.

20

The Role of Parents

IN MY EXPERIENCE, the greatest reason for the failure of marriage is the faulty role played by parents. Parents spend lavishly on their daughters' weddings. This is against the teachings of the Qur'an, which says that it is a satanic act (17:27). What parents ought to do instead, is to prepare their daughters for the role they have to play in the next phase of existence in order to lead a happy life.

Most parents pamper their daughters, but fail to give them real love.

Parents should know that daughters cannot live with them forever. They will eventually have to marry them off one day, and that their stay with their parents is only temporary. And it is also a well-known fact that the environment of one's own home is different from the environment of others. For this reason, it is the duty of parents to train their daughters to adjust to her new home when the time comes, and thus become true life partners to their husbands.

My experience is that 99% of parents fail in this regard. And the price has to be paid by the daughter all her life. When a daughter is not trained to face life in her new environment, she fails to accept her new home in her heart, and keeps on thinking of her parent's home as dearer than her husband's. And such parents also have the habit of interfering in all matters of their daughter's life even after her marriage. This is not love, in the real sense of the word.

21

Education and Women

EDUCATION IS AS important for women as it is for men. Without education, both are incomplete. Education is a need which no one can afford to ignore. Ignoring it would mean depriving oneself of the means to attain a higher goal in life. Unable to reach any worthwhile goal, one would then leave this world in a state of frustration.

Education is so important for both men and

women that no excuse should be made in not seeking education. There can be no excuse for not doing so, for education is not just for procuring a job, but for building up a good life for oneself. Today, education is important in every sphere of life. Therefore, no one can afford to remain uneducated, as that stops one from living life to the fullest.

Man is like an animal. What is it that elevates man above the level of an animal? The difference is education. Education enables man to realize his latent potential and turn it into reality. This is not possible without education. Education here means higher education, not just vocational education. Vocational education ensures one a job, while a broader education transports one to the world of knowledge and wisdom. The acquisition of knowledge and wisdom takes the educated person to the highest pedestal of humanity.

22

Purposeful Man

AN EDUCATED MUSLIM who is actively involved in dawah work got his daughter married to someone who was living in the west. After marriage the girl left for her husband's home. She lived there for some years, and a son was born to her. But due to some disagreements with her husband, the girl became angry, left her husband and returned to India to her parents. The girl's complaints about her husband convinced her father and he came to believe that all the blame lay at the door of her husband.

When I met the father, I heard the whole story and then I said: "it is the heart of a father which speaks and not the heart of the dayee in you." He said that he had made many efforts to make his son-in-law understand, but he found him to be quite adamant. He said: "I won't change; your daughter has to adjust to me."

I said all such kinds of differences took place in a married life. Then I said that there were two

kinds of differences. One was that the husband had some objectionable habits or addictions, such as drinking, etc. Another kind of difference resulted from a temperamental nature. I said that I did not think that his son-in-law had any such wrong habits.

He should therefore take the matter more seriously, and try to make his daughter understand that she should adjust to her husband. I told him that she should consider her husband to be her boss. This was the only practicable solution. There was no other possible alternative. I said, "You are a dayee. A dayee is a man with a purpose. Nothing other than dawah should be an issue. So you should try to convince your daughter to adjust and live with her husband, otherwise your purposeful life of dawah will come to an end through being entangled in this matter. And you will live only as a father, not as a dayee.

23

An Unnatural Desire

Mohammad Rafi (d 1980), was a famous Indian singer. He sang many songs which were very popular with the masses. There was one particular song which moved even the singer himself to tears as he sang it. It was about a daughter leaving for her in-laws home, after her marriage. The lyrics of the song are as follows:

> "Take with you, the prayers of your father,
> I pray for your happiness with your in-laws
> I pray that you find so much love,
> that you do not miss your parent's home."

But this wish is against the law of nature. In the world today, no one can have comfort and love, all the time. To have love and comfort as one's criteria for a successful married life is unrealistic. And it is not possible to achieve such unrealistic goals.

Judging by an unrealistic criterion makes one think that one has ended up with the wrong partner. A lot of people live with this notion and their lives are filled with misery till the day they die. If they had known of and accepted the reality of life, they would have lived differently. And they would have taught their children the same as well. If all parents taught their daughters the reality of life, and prepared them for the many challenges they would face, things would be different. The daughter would take things in a positive manner, would regard new circumstances as challenges posed by nature, and utilize her God-given capabilities to build a successful life for herself.

Life is a challenge for both men and women. Those who know this will see this challenge as a ladder to progress, and by climbing this ladder will reach the higher stage destined for them. Comfort does not lie in material pleasures; comfort lies in discovering the secret to adjusting to one's circumstances.

24

The Secret of Success

As is the custom in the eastern world, after marriage, women leave their parent's home and live with their husband's family in his home. But most women, though physically residing in their husband's home, feel their hearts are in the homes they have left behind. This is an unrealistic way of thinking, and results in disturbed lives.

Parents are basically to be blamed for failing to make their daughters aware of the realities of life. In most cases, the parents take the side of their daughters whenever problems arise, thus giving them a false sense of righteousness. This kind of love in the end leads to affliction, for after they die, their daughter will be left alone to face the harsh realities of life.

I know of a certain father who, at the time of sending off his daughter after marriage, gave her this parting advice; "Where you are going now is your home. Your mother-in-law and your father-in-law are now your parents. We will pray for

your well-being, but you must know that, now, your home as well as your parents have changed." With this sincere advice, the daughter made the home of her in-laws her home, and found all the happiness and security of life she had in the home she left behind.

The secret of success in life is to be realistic. The causes of the majority of the problems in life are the result of an unrealistic way of thinking. The ones who discover this secret will certainly be successful in making their lives pleasant and well worth living.

25

The Difference Between a Parent's Home and an In-Law's Home

HAVING A BLOOD relationship makes it easy for people to love one another. And this is particularly true of parents and children. Even if a child does

not return his parents' love back, he or she will continue to receive love.

But relations regarding one's in-laws are totally different. A daughter-in-law lives with people to whom she is not related by blood. If, at her parent's house, the culture was one of unconditioned love, the culture at her in-laws would be, 'in giving we receive'. This means — that if one is not prepared to give, one will not receive.

It is quite common for women to consider their parent's home ideal, and their in-law's home less than ideal. But the one who suffers as a result of this thinking is the woman herself. Due to this way of thinking, she fails to build a genuine relationship with her in-laws and her husband. God has created men and women with special, different capabilities so that they may play their respective roles effectively. But most women fail to play their roles, and thus leave their potential unutilized.

A joint effort is necessary in order to play any role in this world. A home is an institution where such effort is essential for its successful running. The people in the house should realize this, and make efforts accordingly. This applies more particularly to the woman, as she is the

foundation of a home. And she can play her part effectively only when she considers her in-law's home as her own. But such a course of action can be followed only by those who regard their home as a social institution.

26

The Joint Family

AFTER MARRIAGE, the first question that most often comes to mind is whether to opt for living in a joint family or a nuclear one. The Shariah has nothing against either. One is free to choose any of the two according to one's own convenience. But in my experience, if the couple is mature enough, the joint family system would be beneficial in every respect.

There are many requirements in every home. To build a successful home, many demands have to be fulfilled. In this regard, the joint family system proves more effective than the nuclear one.

In the initial nuclear family, there are only two members—the husband and wife. But later on children are born, and this entails the taking care of one another, and the taking care of the house as well. In a nuclear family, the husband and wife end up having to do everything on their own. While in a joint family, all the members of the family contribute to the functioning of the house, and help each other out. This proves beneficial for everyone. But everything has a price, and in a joint family, one has to live amicably with all the members of the family, avoiding confrontations and unpleasant situations. This is a prerequisite for a successful joint family system. Therefore, those who have an aptitude for harmonious living should opt for this system.

In life, everyone has to pay the price of either system. One either sacrifices one's ego for the benefit of a joint family system, or one keeps one's ego intact, and deprives oneself of these benefits. No one can find both these things at the same time.

27

The Problem Between a Mother-In-Law and a Daughter-In-Law

THERE IS A problem in almost every joint family between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. But this is not a real problem. The problem lies in the underlying psychological condition. One particular way of thinking can be solved by another particular way of thinking.

For instance, if a daughter lies down in the presence of her mother, it will be regarded as something natural. But if a daughter-in-law lies down in the presence of her mother-in-law, she will be regarded as being disrespectful. Problems thus arise, due to this way of thinking, which basically results from the fact that while the mother-in-law does not regard her daughter-in-law as her real daughter, neither does the daughter-in-law regard her mother-in-law as her real mother. If they both were to change their way of thinking, there would be an atmosphere of love

and peace in the family, and problems would never arise.

The law of nature made by God is such that, every daughter will become a daughter-in-law, and every mother a mother-in-law. Therefore, every woman must cooperate with this system, as anyone failing to do so would be disobedient to her Creator. These problems cannot simply be treated as existing between human beings; they are between man and his Creator. For this reason, the solution suggested should be taken seriously, so as not to invoke God's wrath. Angering another man is like angering a human being like oneself, but angering God would be like asking for collision with the entire universe! Who can prevail over the entire universe?

28

An Observation

During one of my journeys to America, I was invited to stay with a Muslim couple. The wife

had been born and brought up in Pakistan, and she had come to America after her marriage.

One day, after the husband had left for work, the wife came to me sobbing. But she was crying so much that she could not tell me anything. The next day, she told me that her husband was not happy with her, and that she was contemplating going back to her parents.

Her declaration had me thinking on the issue, and I tried to understand the problem. I finally came to the conclusion that her parents were responsible for this state of affairs. As it turned out, she was pampered by her parents so much so that she was incapable of managing her house, as she had received no such training whilst she was at her parent's house. After her marriage, and especially after settling down in a different environment, she was incapable of taking care of her husband and her new home. This became a source of unpleasantness in their marital life. In countries like India and Pakistan domestic help is easily available. But life in America was totally different. And for someone who was not used to doing anything, it proved to be very difficult. The difference between the two countries had become a problem for the wife. And this posed a problem for the newly wed couple. And the problem comes

back to the parents of the wife who had shielded their daughter from the realities of life, and when she was faced with them, she could not cope with them. It was this ill-considered approach of the parents that made life miserable for this lady.

29

Breaking Away From the Conditioning Mould

WHEN A MAN and a woman come together in marriage, it is the joining of two different personalities. Each is different from the other in many respects. They are both conditioned to their different ways of up-bringing and lifestyle.

When a child is born, he is conditioned by the environment he grows up in. The environment inside the home, and outside moulds him into what he eventually grows up to be. And this stays with him throughout his life. And as a result, he starts regarding his way of thinking as right.

When one starts to think in this manner, it is the result of conditioning. This happens to almost everyone.

And so, when a man and a woman come together in marriage, this type of conditioning becomes a problem. The woman looks at things from a different angle from the man. And this can result in disagreements which can blow up to great proportions.

The only solution to this problem is to de-condition one another. This can happen only when one opens up and engages in intellectual discussion with the other. And a prerequisite for deconditioning is that one must be willing to admit one's mistakes. Admitting one's mistakes is the only successful way to de-condition oneself.

30

The Greatest Blessing

According to a Tradition, the Prophet of Islam once said: "Of all the good things in the world, a woman of good character is the best!"

This means that every woman is born with this natural potential. And it is a man who has to realize this potential. Just as an ore is nature's gift to man and it is a man's job to turn this ore into steel; so is a woman born with her natural capabilities, and it is a man's responsibility to make her into a good woman.

In order to do this, the first thing a man has to do, is to regard her as an asset. He should look into her inner beauty and see her hidden talents. A woman has great value and potential in her and it is up to a man to convert this potential into actuality, or it will go to waste.

This process is possible only when man realizes that the wife he has found is a gift from God. When he accepts her as God's gift, then he will firmly believe that God's choice for him can never

be wrong. Just as God's choice in all other matters pertaining to the whole Universe is right, so also is God's choice in this matter. When a man understands this, he will see his wife as God's gift, and realise that developing her potential is a matter of divine service. He will do anything to turn his wife into a treasure!

Everyone wants a good wife. But a good wife is not available like ready-made goods. The husband has to perform the role of her transformer. To be successful in this role, he needs qualities like well-wishing from the heart, patience and tolerance.

31

A Tradition

ABU HURAYRAH HAS narrated a saying of the Prophet Muhammad regarding family life in these words:

"No believing husband should have

> negative feelings for a believing wife. For if he does not like one of her traits, he may like other of her traits." (Sahih Muslim)

The truth is that no man or woman is the embodiment of all good qualities. It is a law of nature that if one has some particular good qualities, he will be lacking in another department. For instance, we often see that one who is blessed with outward beauty usually lacks inward beauty; while one who is not so physically well endowed tends to have a beautiful soul.

It is the tendency of man to look at the negative aspects of people rather than their positive aspects. This is a destructive tendency, which comes in the way of good relationships. But if we focus more on the positive aspects rather than the negative ones, we can form healthy relationships. And if we do so, we will find that our life partner is the best partner we can ever find!

God did not create any man or woman inferior. They were perfect by creation. It is our perception which is at fault, and which makes us regard some people as inferior, and some as superior. If we were to realize this, there would be no mutual ill-feeling and we would be able to build our lives in the way God wants us to.

32

Compatibility

THE COMING TOGETHER of a man and a woman in marriage is the most unique event in the Universe. All the things created in the universe are created in pairs. But the compatibility that exists between a man and a woman cannot be found in any other created thing. When a man and a woman come together as life partners, it is evident that they have been made for one another through a conscious plan.

Once life partners realize this, they will be overwhelmed with gratitude at having found each other. They will consider it a blessing. This happiness in each other will endure; they will feel as if they have found something priceless.

Imagine a world without men, or a world without women! There would be life, but it would be totally bereft of happiness. There would be an over-powering feeling that something is missing, something is incomplete. Hence, a world without men is as meaningless as a world without women.

If both men and women ponder upon this reality, they will be far more thrilled than a scientist making a discovery, and they will find that grievances against one another are totally meaningless. Men and women are masterpieces of God's creation. Marriage means the coming together of two masterpieces of creation. Therefore, there is no greater event in the universe than this event!

33

Intellectual Partner

WHEN A MAN is born into this world, he is like iron ore, raw in form. Nature has produced him like ore, and he has to develop himself on his own. Nature produces ore; man has to convert it into steel.

In this process of development, intellectual development is of the utmost importance. In developing one's personality, the most important thing is for man to broaden his mind by

awakening his consciousness. To awaken one's consciousness, three things are required—study, observation and intellectual exchange with other people. Books are the greatest source of knowledge, and studying them is always beneficial. The world of nature is the greatest source for observation. And in the matter of intellectual learning, it is essential for man to form the habit of learning from others, and continue in this learning process.

In the case of married people, they are each other's immediate intellectual partners. From this point of view, marriage is a great opportunity for intellectual development, as both can interact with each other and make progress together intellectually. Intellectual development is essential for everyone. Marriage offers an ideal opportunity for intellectual partners, who are always available for each other, to commune, with one another. And to be successful in this venture there is one condition—that is, to give intellectual development top priority and to make it a part of one's daily life.

34

Mutual Trust

WHEN ANY TASK is assigned to two people, mutual trust between the two is required for the successful completion of the task. Mutual trust between a husband and wife is essential to successfully build a home. No good home is ever built without the existence of mutual trust between a husband and a wife.

One may ask why mutual trust is lacking between most couples. It is because neither is completely committed towards the other in their relationship, despite being married. Such a relationship that is lacking in commitment results in the formation of a psychological barrier between husband and wife. Therefore, both are responsible for this lack of mutual trust in their relationship.

The woman's fault lies in her failing to adapt to and identify herself with her new family, her husband's family. She continues to cling to her own parents. Her failure to adapt to her new family is reflected in her words and actions, and

this naturally creates resentment on the part of her husband.

On the other hand, the man's fault lies in his obsession with the concept of the 'ideal woman'. He often finds his wife falling short on many counts when he measures her by the parameters of the 'ideal woman'.

These are the obstacles mostly inherent in a man and a woman that come in the way of building mutual trust between them. To acquire mutual trust, both have to individually undertake introspection to diagnose their weaknesses and consequently to correct them. Once both the husband and the wife take such corrective measures, they will be able to live their lives in a practical manner. The psychological barrier between them will be removed, and they will be able to build a mutual trust between them which will enable them to lead a positive and successful married life.

35

Beauty or Inner Beauty

MOST YOUNG MEN aspire to have a beautiful wife, which is very immature on their part. And it mostly happens that this 'beautiful' wife turns out to be a 'problem' wife. A woman's attraction does not last very long, and the initial infatuation vanishes into thin air. In matters of marriage, one should attach more importance to the inner beauty of the person. A woman with inner beauty can prove to be the best life partner.

The psychologist, Dr. John Ockert of Frankfort University, writes thus:

> "Gorgeous women feel that beauty is the only asset they have, and cannot bear ageing. Marilyn Monroe, one of the prettiest women to emerge from Hollywood is stated to have wept bitterly when she saw the first traces of wrinkles in the mirror."

The man who finds a woman with inner beauty

is fortunate, as she will prove to be a better companion in life. The purpose of marriage is not to find a playmate, but a worthy life partner. And the best life partner is one who possesses inner beauty, not just outward beauty. This truth can be perceived by everyone, provided things are seen from a realistic point of view.

36

Making Mountains Out of Mole Hills

THE QUARRELS BETWEEN a husband and wife are mostly due to trivial matters. These disagreements can sometimes escalate into serious discord. Since a husband and wife live together, conflicts arise due to constant proximity. If the same couple were to meet in different circumstances, they would most likely get along rather well.

If a couple were aware of the insignificance of their disagreements, serious conflicts would

never arise. This ignorance makes them regard the matter as something of importance, while it is only relative in nature.

The temperament of every person is different. This is a natural phenomenon. Differences do not surface when people are mere acquaintances. Differences start surfacing only when they start their lives together. If couples were to accept these differences as a part of nature, they would learn to look beyond them and work towards a meaningful relationship. Most of the problems in life are due to ignorance. Recognizing one's own ignorance and doing something about it will save one from unnecessary problems.

37

An Incident

ONE DAY I got a call from a city in India. It was from a lady who said that her sister and brother-in-law were on the verge of a divorce due to irreconcilable differences. And that they were to

sign the divorce papers that same day. She requested me to pray for her sister's welfare.

I insisted on talking to her sister, and we duly spoke on the phone. I asked her the reasons for her decision, and she had some complaints. After hearing her out, I told her that her problem was not significant enough to warrant a divorce. And that the differences they had were mainly due to her heightened sensitivity. She had complained that her husband never listened to her, and it was she who always had to listen to him.

I gave her many examples to show her that life does not function on a bilateral basis. It is rather run on a unilateral basis, and she was no exception to this rule. This principle has been called Qawwamiat, or bossism in the Qur'an (4:34), i.e. just as there is a boss or a manager in a company or an institution; in every home, too, there is a boss or a manager. This is a natural law, and is not related to gender equality or inequality. If we fail to recognise it, there can be no peace and harmony either in the home or in any institution.

The sister listened to my advice, and returned to her husband. She withdrew her divorce papers and accepted her husband as her boss, without

setting any conditions. They now lead a happy married life.

38

Controlling Anger

ANGER IS THE major reason for relationships going sour. Anger stokes a quarrel which then begets hatred. And hatred eventually leads to evil. In any relationship, ninety per cent of the trouble starts due to anger. Anger is a natural phenomenon. The only solution to anger is to control it.

Anger in itself is not an evil. It is evil when one fails to control it and it spoils the lives of others.

Rage is nothing but a temporary provocation, which is an undesirable reaction. It is like a fire which flares up for a short duration and then dies down on its own if it is given no further fuel. If people realized this, anger would not result in any serious disharmony.

Anger is similar to a fire in an individual's mind. An unpleasant word or experience can instigate this fire and make it flare up suddenly. However, the duration of this fire is very short. So, when we are angry, it would be wise to hold our tongues or divert our minds and wait for this temporary fire to subside. Once the fire has died out, we will return to normalcy again. It is important to control the anger, so that the flare-up is controlled.

39

Waiting Policy

An ancient maxim says: 'Wait and watch.'

This is not just a maxim; it is a Law of Nature. The policy of waiting means waiting for a better future: waiting for tomorrow to bring something we have not received today. This is undoubtedly a matter of great wisdom, as it is possible that you may receive tomorrow what you have not received today.

In a marriage, the husband and wife often make the mistake of expecting their partner to come up to their expectations from the first day. They ignore the need to give time to each other to adjust, while it is well known that nothing happens before its stipulated time. It is not possible in this world to find today what you are not destined to find until tomorrow.

When a man and a woman come together in marriage and set up a home, it is an entirely new experience. They would naturally want to learn about one another, and come up to each other's expectations. This begins from the first day itself. Both of them should help each other in this, and refrain from any such behaviour as would disrupt this process. The policy of 'waiting' should aid this natural development, and thus allow it to grow unhampered, until it reaches its culmination point. This principle relates to all great successes. And this same principle applies to a husband as well as a wife. It is only after waiting that one receives what one is waiting for. This is a Law of Nature, and no law is greater in this world than the Law of Nature.

40

Stubborness — or Determination

On one of my journeys abroad, I once met a certain Christian lady, who confided to me that her husband was a stubborn person and that she found it difficult to deal with him. This had led them to the verge of divorce. I told her that this was not a real problem—the problem was in her way of thinking. If she thought of it in a different manner, her problems would vanish. Instead of taking him as a stubborn person, 'stubborn' being a negative term; she should consider him a determined person. Using positive words makes one think in a positive manner.

I told the lady that her husband was a determined person, and that this was a good and manly quality. A person who is devoid of this quality does not have the courage to face the challenges of life. And, therefore, one who cannot face the challenges of life cannot achieve success in life. The lady was a translator by profession, and thus proficient in many languages. She was of a gentle disposition and thus well suited to her

profession. Her husband was a manager in a multinational company, where he was required to be tough in order to face the many challenges of the corporate world. God made her gentle, which met the requirements of her job, while her husband was tough to meet successfully the challenges in his profession. She should therefore have been grateful to God instead of complaining.

41

A Wise Lady

AN INCIDENT WHICH took place in a Maharashtrian family is worth mentioning. The daughter of the family married someone of her own choice—an educated man. A son was duly born to them. But soon, differences arose between the young couple, and matters eventually escalated so much that the young wife returned to her parent's home. She laid the blame on her husband.

After hearing her out, her mother replied, "Marriages are for a lifetime; you either adjust to

your husband, or you end your life." The daughter did not expect such a reaction from her mother and was shocked! But she soon recovered, and started to rethink her situation. In the meanwhile, she read the book, "Raz-e-Hayat" by this writer. After finishing the book, she realized that her mother was right and that she had to learn to adjust to her husband, as there was no other option. She began to see life from a new perspective, and finally decided to return to her husband. She went back and started life afresh, without insisting on any set conditions.

I have personally seen that they are living happily together now. They have become good life partners to one another.

The issue of differences is like a rubber band or a spring. If we do not stretch it but let it remain in its normal position, things will never go out of control and will easily be handled.

42

Good in Every Situation

Regarding the maintenance of relationships between a husband and wife, the Qur'an says, "Live with them in accordance with what is fair and kind; if you dislike them, it may be that you dislike something in which God has placed much good." (Ch 4:19)

This principle applies to both the husband and the wife. It means that a good family life does not depend on having found a partner of one's exact choice. According to the law of nature, this is not possible. The secret of a successful family life, rather, lies in adjusting to one another, and in discovering something good even in what seems bad.

Human beings, generally, face a common problem. They all think that they should get more than what they have. Thus discontented, they spend their lives searching for an ideal partner who can live up to their imagination. And in this quest for the ideal, they live unhappy lives.

Happiness is a state of mind. It does not exist outside of it. One should learn this principle, and only then will one see things in a different manner. Only you can make yourself happy. No one can gift happiness to you.

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